

Suggested Accessibility Best Practices for the RSA Annual Meeting **Prepared by Renaissance Society of America Membership Committee**

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[with advice from Barbara Kaminska in relation to art historical presentations]¹

Giving a conference presentation is an invitation to the audience to participate in learning about your research findings. There are many ways to enhance the accessibility of a presentation, so here are some suggestions for presenters/chairs/respondents:

1. **Coordinated presentation plan.** Before the session begins—ideally, before the conference dates—the Chair and session members should consult to ensure consistency in the presentation mode.
2. **Technology and software.** If the venue is set up for the use of audio and visual technology, consider using a presentation software to present your content. Speaking into a microphone during the presentation and/or during the Q&A audience session could be particularly helpful for listeners who are using an audio loop system. Closed captioning in a presentation would work well, too. Many platforms, such as Powerpoint, include closed captioning settings.
3. **Oral delivery for maximum comprehension.** Consider speaking slowly and clearly. It might be helpful to speak directly to the audience and with your face visible to the audience so that your speech is audible. Think about providing appropriate pauses in your presentation to give the audience time to digest the new information you are presenting. Rehearsing your paper beforehand can ensure that you have enough time to follow these best practices.
4. **Specialist terminology.** If you need to use specific academic language, consider explaining the keywords and context in more detail and in plain speech. If you use foreign words (for example, if you are using non-English terms in an English-language presentation), the audience would appreciate it if you could spell out those terms (on a slide or handout, for instance).

¹ These points are adapted from the best practices on accessibility by the American Historical Association (AHA) and the German Studies Association (GSA). For more details, please refer to their websites: GSA link here [<https://www.thegsa.org/conference/current-conference/accessibility-guidelines>] and AHA link here [<https://www.historians.org/events/annual-meeting/resources-and-guides/information-for-speakers-and-chairs/>].

5. **Visuals.** Consider directing the audience's attention to the details of any visual images in your presentation. Think about keeping the slide design simple with a clear, neutral background to enhance the clarity and visibility of any text and image.
6. **Handouts.** If you decide to provide handouts to the audience, you could print the text in a large font size. The handouts could be printouts of the presentation slides, not necessarily the presentation scripts or papers. If there are privacy concerns, you could provide instructions on how and where to return the handouts after the presentation.
7. **Allotted time.** Sessions should avoid running overtime, to minimize interruptions in the schedule and afford time for audience members to ask their pressing questions.
8. **Physical access.** Allow time for people to get to the presentation venue, and time for people to leave. Consider providing clear pathways for easy physical access for the audience and presenters/chairs/respondents.

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